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ABSTRACT

Entries in the bibliography are catagorized as books; journals; or articles, chapters, and monographs. A research report and three books are also reviewed. (MLF)

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changing schools

An Occasional Newsletter on Alternative Public Schools

5:1, 1976 No. 17

PUBLICATIONS ON OPTIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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BRIEF REVIEWS OF NEW BOOKS

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ON OPTIONS

IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

NOTICE TO ICOPE MEMBERS

CHANGING SCHOOLS is now mailed first class to all Consortium members four times per year. This is the first issue for 1976-77.

Options in Public Education

EA 008 712

NSBA ENDORSES ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

Research Report: Alternative Schools. Washington, D.C.: National School Boards Association, 1976 (paperback) $3.50.

In the foreword to this report, Harold V. Webb, Executive Director of the National School Boards Association states:

> The National School Boards Association encourages boards to seriously consider the concept of alternative public educational programs...The purpose of this report is to assist school boards in that consideration.
>
> Options within public school systems exemplify lay control at its best. They make clear that local boards seek to provide what is best for the members of each community.

Changing Schools readers will want to make sure that school board members in their communities see this report.

Did you know that one quarter of the school systems across the country were operating alternative schools and programs in 1975-76? That 14% have approved policy statements that establish the right of students or parents to choose programs? That alternative schools are found in every size district? That 66% of the districts with more than 25,000 students have alternative schools? All this is reported from a 1975 NSBA survey.

The bulk of the report consist of answers from recorded interviews with "several people well known in the world of alternative schools." These six people answer in very different ways the following questions: What good do alternatives do? What problems do alternatives create? How can creative planning processes be initiated? How much do alternative schools cost? How are students matched with the options? How are alternatives evaluated? How are staff selected and trained? Are there alternatives to failure? What do the experts say about getting started?

The report includes a list of resources and two sample policy statements on alternative schools from Minneapolis and Jefferson County, Colorado.

An interesting generalization came out of the 1975 NSBA survey: "The alternative school concept is definitely not on the fringe of American public school activity; it is an important part of the program in many school districts and its significance is growing."

SPECIAL OFFER BY PHI DELTA KAPPA

Phi Delta Kappa is offering nine titles on alternative schools for $15 ($13 to PDK members). This includes *Alternatives in Education: Freedom to Choose*, a special bicentennial volume by the editors of *Changing Schools*. (See attached flyer.)

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DOING IT

Teaching and Administering The High School Alternative Education Program by Fred B. Chernow and Harold Genkin. West Nyack, N.Y.: Parker, 1975.

Designing a Transportation System for a Parent Choice School District by Allan Paller, Lynette Ferrara and Eileen Manley. Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Education, 1975.

Frequently people ask us for books that tell how to. Here are two that do exactly that. Chernow and Genkin, the founders of Pacific High School, an alternative public school in Brooklyn, describe their book as "a practical and down-to-earth guide for the professional educator who wishes to become successfully involved in an alternative school program...a practical handbook for the individual who is committed to establishing, maintaining and capitalizing on the extraordinary educational advantages offered by the alternative high school."

The book is full of practical information on setting up the school, on teaching, on space, on curriculum, on parent and community support, and on evaluation. For those seeking specific information in these areas, this is the book.

For some, the book may be too specific. What works well in one community rarely works without modification in another.

While it's not intended to be a serious criticism of the book, the authors slight the political problems that plague many alternative public schools. Frequently it is the politics of education that threaten the survival of the alternative school. A book dealing with this topic well is still to come.

Paller, Ferrara, and Manley have written a manual for transportation supervisors based on information from the Alum Rock voucher program. This manual provides information on manual, semi-automated, or automated systems for transportation planning and then tells how to choose the best approach for your school district. The book is technical and would be of little interest to the general reader, but it will be quite worthwhile for transportation supervisors and other administrators.

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WHAT'S-HIS-NAME'S BACK!

Alternative Education: A Source Book for Parents, Teachers, Students, and Administrators. Edited by Mario D. Fantini. New York: Doubleday, 1971. (paperback) $4.50.

The fabulous Fantuzzi has done it again. The author of *Public Schools of Choice* has put together a comprehensive selection of readings which provide an excellent background on alternatives in education. While many of these selections will be familiar to proponents of alternative schools, the book will provide an excellent introduction for the unsophisticated.

However, the sophisticated will still want to get this book because it brings together for the first time such an extensive collection on alternatives: from Mortimer Smith to Ivan Illich, from Quincy to Las Vegas, from designing the alternative school to teacher preparation for alternatives, from the single mini-school to the large district-wide system of alternatives.

The editor's introduction to each section--all new Fanfonni material--is easily worth the price of the book as the following quotations show:

> Slowly during the 1970s a new public policy began to emerge: *the education problem is not the fault of the learner, but of the institution.* Consequently, the task is not one of trying to fit the learner to the school, but, rather, the other way around. How can public schools be reformed without dismantling the existing structure or alienating any of those who are part of it? Is there any way that we can deal with the problem constructively while also satisfying the three major criteria: educational soundness, economic feasibility, political viability? It is in this context that educational alternatives and choice begin to enter the picture.
>
> ...We are on the brink of an educational movement that promises to deliver genuine reform by diversifying public education and by providing teachers, parents, and students choices.
>
> ...There is an alternative schools movement beginning in this country that could very well become the major thrust of reform in the decades ahead.

Is Fantini the prophet of our educational future? Everyone--parents, teachers, legislators, the general public--should read this book and judge for themselves.

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